

THE CHALLENGE

OF THE

REV. R. J. M'GHEE

TO THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOPS OF THE FOUR
PROVINCES OF IRELAND.

THE serious consideration of this important letter, and of the no less important document to which it refers, is earnestly entreated.

In the early part of the present year, this devoted, faithful, and unwearied champion for the truth of Christ against the errors of Antichrist, published a letter to Dr. Murray, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, to the Roman Catholic parish priests of Dublin, and to the President and Theological Professors of the College of Maynooth.

That letter appeared in the "Dublin Evening Mail," and was also sent round to each of the parties, accompanied with a tabular form, pointing out the antiquity of the creed of the Protestant or Christian Church, and the novelty of the errors which are particularly embodied in the creed of the modern Church of Rome, and stamp on her the mark of apostasy.

They were also specially invited to meet him to discuss the points referred to in his letter, and Mr. M'Ghee offered to conform to the Church of Rome, on the simple condition that they could prove the creed of the

Romish Church to have been ever heard of as the creed of the Christian Church, previous to the year 1564, but they took no notice of his letter, and when he subsequently held his great Meeting at the Rotunda, though the platform was divided into two equal sections, one with a chair and seats for the clergy of the Established Church, and the other with a chair and seats for the priests of the Church of Rome, yet none of the latter attended.

Mr. M'Ghee, however, proceeded to deliver his lecture,* which was most enthusiastically received, and has since been published with some of the documents referred to, including the creeds of the two Churches, in a *tabular form*.†

To the whole is appended a letter, thus introduced by Mr. M'Ghee, p. 46:—

* This Lecture, affectionately dedicated to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, may be had at Messrs. Seeley and Co.'s, Fleet-street. Price 1s. 6d.

† This has been published separately, and is called "The Old Creed of the Christian Church, and the New Creed of the Church of Rome." It may be had at No. 11, Exeter-hall, price 1d.

"The following letter, addressed to the four Roman Catholic archbishops, is necessary to conclude the writer's testimony on this subject. Whenever a Roman Catholic shall assert, in any part of Ireland, that the creed of his Church was heard of in Christendom, as a creed, before the year 1564;—let him go to his priest, bishop, or archbishop, and ask, what is the reason why the archbishop of the province has not received the writer of this letter into the Church of Rome, on the simple condition of proving the fact?

"THE ANCIENT CREED OF THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

"*To the Most Rev. the Archbishops of the Church of Rome, in the Four Provinces of Ireland, now assembled in Dublin.*

"Most Rev. Sirs,—It is to be sincerely hoped that any attempt, however humble, to promote peace and concord in our unhappy country will be received by you with complacence if not with encouragement, and that if you feel you can conscientiously co-operate in any measure that has this laudable object in view, you will be anxious and ready to do so.

"There can be no doubt you will admit the following principles as just and true:—

"First—The faith of Christ must necessarily promote peace and love amongst those who sincerely profess and follow it.

"Secondly—It is a fact it did so promote these blessings in the days of the apostles, and among the primitive Christians.

"Thirdly—We must conclude that when this happy effect is not produced, the cause does not exist; in other words, that those who are not taught by their religion to live in peace, and love one another, have not the Apostolic faith in Christ, but must necessarily have departed from it.

"Now, we do not love one another as we ought to do in Ireland. See what contentions there are between Protestants and Roman Catholics; therefore I conclude there must be somewhere a departure from the true profession of the primitive faith; either the Church of Rome has departed from

it, or the Church of England has departed from it, or both have departed from it.

"Surely, then, it is the plain duty of those who have departed from it to retrace their steps, and return to the faith of the Catholic Church.

"If Protestants have departed from it let them return. If Roman Catholics have departed let them return. Let us agree to meet in the unity of the faith of the ancient holy Catholic Church. The profession of faith in which the ancient Church was saved, is one in which we may be saved, yea, the only one in which we can be saved—for if men do not hold it in word or in principle, beyond all question they shall surely perish.

"The Roman Catholics believe that Protestants have departed from this profession of faith of the ancient holy Catholic Church. We say that they have departed from it. Surely this point can be settled. It is for this purpose I take the liberty of addressing you.

"I wish to bring this question to a conclusive issue, and so I venture to address the four archbishops of the Church of Rome, in the four provinces of Ireland, that the Roman Catholics of every province may see how the case stands, and how totally they have been deceived in supposing that the Church of England has departed from the faith of the ancient Catholic Church. I lay down these two facts which I humbly submit to you, Most Rev. Sirs, as not to be contradicted.

"If any person desires to join himself to the Church of England, we propose to him to subscribe and abide by our profession of faith; and this profession of faith is not only the same which was propounded by the four first general councils, but it is the same which the Council of Trent, in her third session, February 4, 1546, declared to be 'That summary in which all who profess the faith of Christ necessarily agreed, and that firm and only foundation against which the gates of hell should never prevail.'

"If this be true, it must be clear as the sun that the Church of England has not departed from the pure faith of the ancient holy Catholic Church.

"Now, if a person desires to join

himself to the Church of Rome, you propose to him to subscribe your profession of faith, which is not only not the same as ours—the same as that which was set forth by the four first general councils—the same as that which the Council of Trent asserted that it is the ‘Firm and only foundation against which the gates of hell shall never prevail’—but you call him to subscribe a profession of faith which no Christian Church on earth ever saw or heard of till the month of December, 1564, exactly 282 years ago.

“Now I wish to place this one simple fact prominently before your own view, and that of all the Roman Catholics of Ireland; for I am quite certain that if they knew this one fact, it would not be very difficult to lead them to see that their brethren of the Church of England are not heretics, and that we could easily be united in the ancient holy Catholic Faith again. Then to borrow from your friend, (Mr. O’Connell,) Ireland should be

“Great, glorious, and free,
First flower of the earth, and first gem of the sea.

“Now, Most Rev. Sirs, I beg while you are, as I understand, assembled in Dublin, to propose to you all, as I have already proposed to the most Rev. Dr. Murray—

“I propose that you should receive me into your Church on one simple condition, namely—That when you bring your ritual with you, and your form for absolving heretics to me to subscribe, you prove to me that the creed which you call on me to adopt, was ever known or heard of in the Christian Church by man, woman, or child, till the year 1564.

“I invite you, on the other hand, to bring your own edition of General Councils, by Mansi, printed at Rome, and I will undertake to show you, that if the Council of Ephesus be true, a bishop, by the very act of proposing such a creed to a man wishing to join

his church, incurs the sentence of being deposed from his office; and also, that by the testimony of the Council of Trent, you propose to me to depart from ‘The summary of faith in which all who professed the faith of Christ up to the year 1546 necessarily agreed’—you call me to leave that which the Council of Trent declared to be the firm and only foundation against which the gates of hell should never prevail.

“Now, most Rev. Sirs, I enclose to you by this post, addressed to the care of Mr. Coyne, the document* on this important subject which I have before enclosed to the priests. You can answer whether I write truly or falsely.

“If your creed be that of the ancient Christian Church, the ancient holy Catholic Church of Ireland, then you can on my own offer, demand of me publicly to join your Church by subscribing it.

“But if not, then I entreat you to give up the novelties which the Bishop of Rome added to the ancient creed of Ireland and of Christendom; and for Christ’s sake and your own sake, let us all unite in honest Christian fellowship in subscribing the faith of the ancient holy Catholic Church of Ireland.

“I write this with the hope that all my reverend brethren in the four provinces will follow my example—that they will call for the documents on the creeds which I enclose to you; and that they will then practically prove to our dear Roman Catholic countrymen that they may all yet, by God’s mercy, be brought to unite in the ancient faith of our own old Catholic Church of Ireland, and cast away all novelties which our forefathers never knew.—I have the honour to be, Most Rev. Sirs, your Faithful Servant in the Old Faith,

“R. J. M’GHEE.

“London, April 30, 1846.”

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